

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

***Ptilotus luteolus*, a new combination in *Ptilotus* (Amaranthaceae)**

Benl has been the most prominent recent author on the genus *Ptilotus* R.Br., and described a number of infraspecific taxa from a small amount of material. Many new collections have now been made and it has become apparent that the ranking of these taxa is in need of review. After infraspecific taxa in *Ptilotus astrolasius* F.Muell. were examined it became apparent that *Ptilotus astrolasius* var. *luteolus* Benl & H.Eichler warrants the rank of species.

Ptilotus luteolus (Benl & H. Eichler) R.W.Davis, *stat. et comb. nov.*

Ptilotus astrolasius var. *luteolus* Benl & H. Eichler, *Nuytsia* 4: 269 (1983). *Type*: 8 miles [13 km] south of Meekatharra on Gabanintha road, Eremeian Province, Western Australia, 22 September 1957, N.H. Speck 884 (*holo*: CANB; *iso*: PERTH).

Ptilotus luteolus clearly differs from *Ptilotus astrolasius* in having a denser leaf indumentum with verticillate hairs that are much longer and distinctly branched, compared with a sparser leaf indumentum on *Ptilotus astrolasius* with hairs that are largely stellate and only shortly branched. Spikes in *P. luteolus* are yellow, but they are mostly green with a pink tinge in *P. astrolasius*. The bracteoles, tepals, and style in *P. luteolus* are consistently much longer than in *P. astrolasius* (Table 1), while the seeds are black in *P. luteolus* they are brown in *P. astrolasius*.

There are differences in habitat, with *P. luteolus* preferring rocky slopes, screes, and ridges while *P. astrolasius* occurs on in varied habitats including hills, plains and the bases of sandy dunes. The distributions of the two taxa are allopatric, with *P. luteolus* occurring in the southern Gascoyne and Murchison IBRA regions and *P. astrolasius* in the northern Gascoyne, Pilbara and through to the Kimberleys.

Table 1. Morphological comparison of *Ptilotus astrolasius* and *P. luteolus*

Characters	<i>Ptilotus astrolasius</i>	<i>Ptilotus luteolus</i>
Spike colour	green, pink	yellow
Spike width (mm)	7–13	14–18
Bracteole length (mm)	2.5–3.6	3.8–4.1
Outer tepal length (mm)	4.4–5.3	6.2–7.6
Staminal cup length (mm)	0.5–0.8	1.2–1.4
Style length (mm)	1.7–2	2.8–3
Seed colour	brown	black

Benl (1983), after listing the many differences between the two taxa cited a small number of specimens of the typical variety that he felt tended towards var. *luteolus*. However, assessment of the many extra collections now in PERTH, as well as field observations, show that the taxa are distinct and with no intergradation or intermediates.

References

- Benl, G. & Eichler, H. (1983). Taxonomic Studies of *Ptilotus* R.Br. (Amaranthaceae) in Western Australia, *Nuytsia* 4: 269–270.

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